

JAN 16 1935

A
General Epistle :

CONTAINING

Wholsom Admonition & Advice to Friends
in IRELAND, and else-where.

By Thomas Carleton.

Dear and well-beloved Friends, Brethren and Sisters
who are in some Measure gathered by the Arm of
God's Power, and have known the blessed Appearance of Life and Salvation, to you is the Salutation of my
unfeigned Love, and in the Fellowship of God's Everlasting
Light do I tenderly greet you all ; and for the clearing of my
Spirit, of that which for some time hath been upon me, do I communicate these Lines, in the true Simplicity of my Heart,
dearly desiring all that love the Lord Jesus Christ, To keep
low and near the Lord, and wait to feel God's living Power in
your Hearts, unto which we were turned or exhorted from the
Beginning ; for, in the Light of the Lord, I see there is a Necessity for it : For, unless the Sense of God's living Power be
felt, Profession is vain, and Meetings are not made profitable ;
for the Mysteries of Life and Salvation, and of true Christianity, consist not only in any Profession, Name or Notion, of
this or that Principle, Article or Creed, formed or received

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in the Minds of Men or Women, but in a living Enjoyment and Possession of the Power and Spirit of Christ Jesus, the Author & Finisher of the living saving Faith. So my dear Friends, all wait to feel the Operation of that Power in every Heart and Soul, to subdue all to God, and to work all into submission and real obedience to the heavenly Will and Mind of Christ Jesus, *who is come a Light into the World, that all men through him might believe*; here is the unchangeable standing Rule, which every one is to measure themselves by; and he or she that is measured or squared by this, is as polished Stones for God's spiritual House; and he or she that is not squared by this, are not fit to be Members of God's Building: so all having the Measuring line in your hearts, let Judgment be laid to it, and so try all things, words, works, behaviours, and the Intent of all, and from what ground & spirit it doth proceed: and this unchangeable everlasting Rule all keep to it, and build by it, so shall you be justified with it in the Day of Tryal; so all things done by this unchangeable measuring Rule (the Law of the Spirit of Life) this keeps clean and pure, and sets free of all Mud and Confusion, Sin and Iniquity, and things that bring death and darkness over the Soul and Understanding, and so cloud the Testimony: So let every man and woman (by this standing Rule) examine themselves, and so let them eat, speak or act, as the Lord shall persuade them; and wherein any one doubteth, and is not clear in what he or she undertaketh, let such forbear, and wait in quietness till the Lord clear their way: So all take heed, and keep to the Rule; for in the Lord's Light we see Light, and have Clearness, and Freedom, and Peace; but going from the Light, without Rule, without Guide, the Vail comes over, Darkness gathers in, Confusion & Trouble, then Peace comes to be lost: So you that have known in any measure the work of Regeneration and of the New Birth through the working of God's Spirit & Power in your Hearts, by which some unclean spirits have been cast out, keep to the Power still, & beware of letting in the unclean spirit again, for if you do, the latter end will be worse then the beginning. And lean not to the World's Wisdom, beware of that spirit I advise all; for by that wisdom God is not known;

and

and if once the Sense and enjoyment of God be lost, then man and woman is in a woful state, without God in the World; so keep out of the world's spirit I intreat you all, and live as Fools to it, and all its *ways, fashions & customs*; for in the Lord I see a great Snare at this day, and too many that make Profession of Truth are like to be split upon that Rock. So dear Friends, live loose to the world, and all the glories of it, and seek to be wise in that which is not of this world, that you may be loved of God; and so dwell in that which can bear the *revilings, and reproaches* of this world, and the *contradiction of sinners*, as our Lord Jesus Christ hath left us an Example: So beware of looking back to Egypt's Glory again, to see any *beauty or comeliness* in that dark Land; for, from the Lord I see a Temptation attending God's *spiritual Israel* in this day, as surely as ever it attended *Israel* after the Flesh, and many are too prone to desire the *pleasures* of Egypt again (*though the best of them be bondage, as many to their Sorrow have found*) yea, too many there be that cannot bear *tryals and reproaches*, and the way of the *Cross* and *self-denial*, but think it *long, and wearisome, and hard*, as they did in the dayes of old, and so are too ready to murmur and repine, and lust in their hearts after this World's *glory* again, and joyn to its *fashions & customs* again, and so set up Idols again, as they did whose *Carcases* fell in the *Wilderness*, with whom the Lord was displeased: So beware of letting in that spirit of *distrust, unbelief* and *rebellion* against God, and his pure Witness in your Consciences, and beware of building that which was once destroyed; or licking up that which was once vomited, or entertaining of that which was once cast out, or owning that which was once denied, either in *words, in works, in behaviour, in apparel, in doctrine or faith*: hath Truth in you condemned for all idle, vain, prophane, wicked, unsound and unavowry words, and brought you into a Form of needful, true and sound words? keep to it still: hath Truth condemned all idle, proud, prophane, wicked and ungodly *actions*; and all empty, airy, foolish, wanton, lustful, proud, self-willed and men-pleasing *behaviours*, and brought you into Moderation, Gravity, Plainness, Reallity and Truth in Life and Conversation? keep to it still: hath Truth condemned for decking & adorning the Body with vain, super-

fluous, proud, needles, worldly, eye-taking Toyes in Appa-
 rel, and led you into plain, profitable, decent needful, things?
 keep to is still : and fashion not your selves like unto the world,
 nor learn any of their Manners nor of the Breeding of that *E-*
gyptian-Spirit, which keeps the Seed in Bondage, and oppresseth
 the Just in the particular and in the general; so from the Lord I
 advise you all, and warn you all that are parents, to watch over
 your Children, and bring them up in the Nurture and Admoni-
 tion of the Lord, and beware you breed them not up in the
 World's manners nor customs, nor in Pride, Lightness and Va-
 nity, nor in things that puff up and lead away their Minds from
 under the Cross of Christ Jesus, but rather breed them up in
 Humility, Lowliness and Self denial, and in the Fear of the
 Lord, which is the Beginning of true Wisdom and gate of Vir-
 tue; and so endeavour to train them up in the right way to life,
 and lay a good Foundation in them while they are young, and
 then both you and they may expect a Blessing from the Lord
 which is better then all. So away with all Manners and Breed-
 ing, and Education that is out of the Fear of God; for you your
 selves know, the first Nature in it self is too inclinable to be ta-
 ken with the Manners and Customs of the *Egyptian* Spirit, and
 to take pleasure and conceit itself, and be puffed up with
 and in those things that lead from God, without nursing and
 encouraging thereunto; so keep all low in Meekness and
 Self-denial, that God's Fear may be timely planted in their
 Hearts, and the Principle of Life and Peace they may be instru-
 cted in, as you your selves have learned them of the Lord, that
 so the loving kindness and gentle dealings of God towards
 us, we may tell of them to our Children, and they to another
 Generation; so all learning the Way of the Cross and Self-
 denial, that Will that is carnal and earthly will be mortified
 and slain, and the Spirit of the World and the Customs thereof
 will be crucified to you all, and you all unto it, and then, how
 can they that are crucified to the world live any longer therein?
 and so spiritual Men and spiritual Women, Sons and Daughters
 of the incorruptible Seed, begotten again by the Power and
 Spirit of Christ Jesus, and so dead to the world's Spirit, Wayes,
 Customs, Manners, Traditions, Ordinances and Worships, all

in the Fall and Degeneration from God, and every one living up to this, being guided by God's Wisdom, keep their Testimony clear and unviolated in the Sight of God and Men. So stand true Witnesses for God, and be faithful, or full of Faith in the Lord; believe in him, love him above all, and trust him with all, Wife and Children, Estate and Life; and take heed of giving Offence, or of causing Truth to suffer in its Esteem; for God hath glorified it, and will glorifie it; and Wo from the Lord is to them that cause Truth to be evil spoken of, that brings a Blot upon their Testimony, & so marreth the Visage & Countenance of Truth in the particular, or in the general. And dear Friends stand living Witnesses for God's Truth, and be not cowardly, but valiant, as Souldiers of Christ Jesus, and stand up against all the Works & Workers of Iniquity, against all Hirelings & false Shepherds, against the grand Oppression of Tythes, with the abolished Ceremonies and Ordinances of the first Covenant, and *Jews*, outwardly, which Antichrist and the Deceivers that are gone into the World (having lost the Power) would innovate and set up again, among the *Gentiles* or *Jews* inward, contrary to the Institution of God; and stand up against all Swearing, and that which leads to Swearing, and against Lying or Stealing, and against Fighting or Killing (since our Kingdom is not of the World) and against Fornication, Adultery, Whoredom, Lasciviousness, Luxury, and all manner of Uncleaness, the Sins of this World, which are so vile they are scarce fit to be spoken of, or named amongst the Saints; so as becomes Warriors for God, and the everlasting Gospel of Christ Jesus, stand clear of them all, and against them all, and then there will be no need of Shifts and Excuses, and crooked Reasons in the false wisdom, to hide or cover any one with. And my dear Friends, let your Yea be Yea, and your Nay be Nay, and keep to the form of Sound Words in all your Communications, Bargains and Dealings one with another, and also with them that are without, that so you may honour the Lord, and honour his Truth, & convince all with whom you have to do that *truth & right conscience lives in you, and you live in it*; this is the *glory of all profession*. And be not forward & rash in words & promises; for some there are, yea, too many, that make profession of Truth &

true:

true Religion, & yet know not a Bridle for the Tongue; and the Apostle said, *such mens Religion was vain*; ye, and too many there are, that are *hasty to promise, and slow to perform*, and then shuffle to excuse themselves (as *Eve* did) where no Excuse can properly bear in the Truth; so beware of it, I desire you all; for this was one express Token the Apostle laid down of the *falling away*; therefore be careful to make absolute Promises, and be as careful, quick and forward to perform, when promised, and that keep Truth clear, and answers the Expectations of all, and preaches to all with whom we have to do, and hereby the Saints reached God's Witness in one another in the beginning, so keep to it still, and every one speak the Truth from his heart without *disimulation*, and learn not the sleighty words and cunning evasions of the deceitful spirits of this world, which darken knowledge, thereby to drive Bargains to accomplish self ends and covetous designs; for such things (though never so fairly glossed) are inconsistent with the innocency and naked simplicity of our Gospel: neither is Truth honoured by such deceitful coverings: so all Friends, keep clear of such things, and be plain-hearted with all men; for no *coverings* will hide or avail in this bright light some day, but that of God's eternal Spirit, which will stand over all, and *darkness* cannot comprehend it; but going from the Light and Spirit of God, into the fallen deceitful wisdom, then the world comprehends, and sounds, and bottoms all such, and so Truth suffers in the particular, and in the general; so the Law of the Spirit of Life, which we profess, is beyond all Law, and a Rule beyond all Rules, and reaches further to the ordering and guiding of all those that are resolved and given up to it, in Obedience, than all Laws, Precepts, Canons or Injunctions that are outward whatsoever; so the Righteousness that is God's, which Christ-Jesus is the Author of, is beyond all, & exceeds all the Righteousness of other Professions, *Scribes* or *Pharisees*; whereby its plain every Righteousness doth not enter, nor is accepted of God, but only that which exceeds the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, which Christ works in all his by the Operation of his eternal Spirit. So my dear Friends, wait to feel it, and the effectual Works of it brought forth in you all, which to feel is more than words, that your Faith may stand in it, and in a living En-

Enjoyment of it : for that man or woman that doth not feel it; and the efficacy & vertue of it, they bring forth from a strange Vine, which Christ Je'us will not own; and all take heed, and keep low in God's Fear. And you my Friends, that are rich in this World, or have much of the Creat on of God, Do you watch and take heed; for there is a Snare, and that none of the least, which attends that state also; and if the Lord hath increased your store, set not your hearts upon them, nor trust to them; *for he that trusteth to his Riches, shall fall; for as one said, They are not forever, but sometimes make themselves wings, and fly away:* so be not lifted up with them, but eye the Lord, and posses as though you possessed not & labour to be rich towards God, and rich in good Works; and remember poor afflicted *Joseph*, and be ready to do good, and to communicate, as said the Apostle, and keep your Hearts single and loose to those things, and so in God's Wisdom you will see your Way & Service, and the End and Use of all. And all you Young Men and Women, that are single and unmarried, you have an Opportunity to serve the Lord; do you keep low, and beware of being entangled or brought in Bondage by youthful Lusts; for thereby many have lost a good condition with God: and brought themselves to Sorrow and Wo, both in this Life and that which is to come: And above all, take heed of joyning Affinity with strange Nations, and such as know not God, nor obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; for this was forbidden *Israel* after the flesh, *Deut 7 3, 4.* and for their Disobedience herein, God's anger was kindled against them, and they were carryed away captive many years; which made *Ezra*, the Servant of the Lord, rent his Garments, and pluck his Hair off his Head and Beard, and mourn before the Lord, till he and the Elders of *Israel* resolved to put away their Strange Wives, *Ez 9, 10.* chap. And *Esau* by marrying the Daughters of *Heath*, so grieved his Father and Mother, that *Rebecca* complained, *she was weary of her Life*, *Gen. 27. 46.* And *Paul* advised, *not so be unequally yoked together, Believers with Unbelievers, knowing there could be no Union between Light and Darkness, nor the Temple of God and Idols, &c.* so keep your Hearts single to God, and wait in God's Wisdom to overcome the Wicked One in your own part.

particulars, and seek to be married to the Lord first, and joyned to the Lord by his eternal Spirit, which brings into Unity, and keeps Chastity in Mind and Spirit unto him: and observe the Advice of the Apostle, who said, *The Unmarried cared for the things of the Lord, how he or she might please the Lord; but the married for the things of this World, how he or she might please Wife or Husband*: So all be watchful, and mind your Places and Callings in Christ Jesus: but if any one (in the Fear and Wisdom of God) do see it their way to marry, let such seek God's Counsel, and be not hasty, but wait in it, that he or she may enjoy a Wife or a Husband in the Peace & Love of God, and to be joyned one by his eternal Spirit, and then Meet helps and a Blessing one to another, and then the Marriage is honourable, and the Bed undefiled; so all keep clean, and live up to God in all things, in all States and Conditions, in your Places and Callings whereunto God hath called you, that the Lord may take pleasure to do you good, and to multiply his Blessings upon you, that the Issues of Life and Peace may abound, and run through all, and rest upon all your Hearts and Souls as the Dew of Hermon. *And the God of Peace and Love preserve us all in his Peace and Love, and carry us through all by the Arm of his Eternal Power, and guide us all in his heavenly Wisdom, to the Praise, Glory and Renown of his Everlasting Name, who is God alone, blessed forever and for evermore.*

Written the 13th of the 7th Moneth, 1676.

Your Friend and Brother in the
Obedience of Truth

Tho. Carleton.

